that the Planning Commission is seized of the matter and if there are any problems, we will come up with the required solution before this cropping season.

I am not sure where this business is coming in of the Planning Commission changing its targets. It is true that in the Approach Paper there are two growth configurations given. One is of a lower order of rate of growth which is a kind of trend projection and the other is the projection which the National Development Council agreed to it, is a 7 per cent growth rate. The Planning Commission has given the 7 per cent growth exercise a fairly detailed consideration of the kind that has been talked about.

In fact, in the Approach Paper the maximum number of pages are on these details — regional strategies; a need for sectoral water plan; a need for sectoral agricultural plan. As I submitted earlier, given the kind of demand configurations which follow from a seven per cent rate of growth, the kind of growth that we are talking about, is required. From the production side, it is possible. Maybe, there was a reference to growth value-added, which would be lower perhaps than the growth of gross output. So, on this question since I do not really have a concrete guideline, I am sorry to say that I cannot say anything beyond this.

Private Steel Plants in the Country

*502. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: †
SHRI RAJNATH SINGH 'SURYA

Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) the condition of private steel plants in our country by and large;

(b) the companies making profits and those incurring losses; and

(c) the measures being taken by Government to protect the loss-making companies?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINISTER OF MINES (SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA): (a) to (c) Whereas in the liberalised economic regime the financial performance of private sector steel units is not centrally regulated, available information for 1994-95 and 1995-96 for major steel producing units in the private sector shows that the financial performance has been good. As for 1996-97, financial performance would be known after the accounts are finalised.

Private sector steel plants are subject to the vigorous interplay of the market forces. Companies making losses have to respond to the situation in the manner they think best and are free to approach banks and financial institutions for necessary assistance. For sick companies, Board for Industrial and Financial Reconstruction provides an institutional mechanism for addressing their problems.

श्री संजय निरूपम: सर, मंत्री महोदय से जो मेरा सवाल था वह सवाल का सार मोटा-मोटी तौर पर यह था कि प्राइवेट स्टील फैक्टरीज की परफॉर्मेंस पिछले दो-चार सालों के अन्दर क्या रही है। इन्होंने जो जवाब दिया है उससे ऐसा लगता है कि किसी ले-मैन ने जवाब दिया है। मैं तो एक ले-मैन हूं और मुझे ज्यादा समझ नहीं है, लेकिन मंत्री महोदय से मैं उम्मीद करता हूं कि उनको तो इसमें विशेष जानकारी होनी चाहिए थी। इसमें विशेष जानकारी किसी भी तरह की नहीं है। 1994-95 और 1995-96 के बारे में जो प्राइवेट स्टील सैक्टर की परफार्मेंस के बारे में बताया है उन्होंने कहा है कि जनरली गुड रहा है, अच्छा रहा है। उसके बाद 1996-97 के बारे में उन के पास कोई जानकारी नहीं है। मेरा जो सवाल पूछने के पीछे एक जो उद्देश्य था, जो मकसद था, जो निहित स्वार्थ है, वह यह है कि इंपोर्ट ड्यूटी घटने के बाद और कोयले की प्राइस बढ़ने के बाद पब्लिक सैक्टर में स्टील की प्राइस हमारे यहां लगातार बढ़ रही है और जो बाहर से स्टील आ रहा है वह स्टील बहुत सस्ता होता जा रहा है, हालात क्या है आप भी जानते होंगे मंत्री महोदय कि सेल के पास जरूरत से ज्यादा स्टील पड़ा हुआ है और वह बेच नहीं पा रहा है क्योंकि हमारी स्टील अब इंटरनेशनल स्टील के मुकाबले प्राइस के मामले में कंपीट नहीं कर पा रही है, तो मैं यही जानना चाह रहा हूं कि प्राइवेट स्टील प्लांट्स में जो स्टील प्रोड्यूस हो रही है, जो मैनुफैक्चर हो रही है, उन स्टीलों की क्या दशा है? क्या वह हमारे यहां मार्केट में प्रोपर तरीके से इंपोर्टेड स्टील से कंपीट कर पा रही हैं और उनके एक्सपोर्ट के क्या चांसेज हैं, मेरा पूछने का मकसद यह है?

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Sir, after the economic reforms in our country,

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Sanjay Nirupam.

a liberalised policy has also been adopted in steel industry. So, the Government has a very little say in the functioning of steel industry in the private sector. It is true that the inventory in steel industry is going up in our country. Regarding performance of the steel industry in private sector during 1996-97, I would like to inform the hon. Member that we cannot say about it at the moment because the Government is not monitoring the financial performance of the steel industry in private sector in our country. We are getting information only from the respective steel industries. Sir, we have not yet received the audited accounts of the steel industry in private sector for this financial year. I do agree with the hon. Member that inventory in steel industry is going up in our country. I know that the price of steel is going down in the international market. Due to the reduction in Customs Duty, the steel industry in our country is facing some problem. It is also facing problems due to the increased prices of coking and non-coking coal. But, Sir, it is not true that our steel product, our Indian steel product is inferior to the international product.

Sir, in comparison with the exports and imports in our country, I would like to say that exports are going up and imports are coming down. From the above, it is clear that in spite of difficulties faced by the steel industry in our country, the steel industry is doing well.

श्री संजय निरूपम: सर, मंत्री महोदय का जवाब यह है कि हमारे स्टील की क्वालिटी खराब नहीं है। मैंने कई बार कहा है कि हमारे स्टील की क्वालिटी खराब नहीं है, हमारे स्टील की क्वालिटी अच्छी है, लेकिन सवाल उस की कीमत से जुड़ा हुआ है और फिर वह कह रहे है कि एक्सपोर्ट बढ़ रहा है और इम्पोर्ट घट रहा है, लेकिन ऐसी कोई फिगर्स आप दे नहीं पा रहे हैं। सर, मैं इंडस्ट्री की स्टील सब-कमेटी में हूं। वहां पर भी आज तक इस तरह का कोई आंकड़ा नहीं दिया गया है कि एक्जैटली कैसे हमारा एक्सपोर्ट बढ़ रहा है और इम्पोर्ट घट रहा है? लॉजिकली यह डिस्कस करें तो यह नहीं हो सकता है क्योंकि बाहर के देशों में जो स्टील की प्राइस है, वह बहुत कम है और हमारे स्टील की प्राइस बहुत ज्यादा है। इसलिए हम अपना स्टील बाहर भेज ही नहीं सकते चाहे कितनी ही अच्छी क्वालिटी हो। फिर बाहर के देशों की स्टील की क्वालिटी से हमारी क्वालिटी बहुत अच्छी नहीं है। उपसभापति महोदया, जो फिगर मैं चाह रहा था, वह नहीं आ रही है, इसलिए मेरा सवाल है-ऑलरेडी जो प्राइवेट स्टील सेक्टर की हमारे यहां स्थिति है, वह बहुत अच्छी नहीं है। मुझे जो जानकारी है, उस के मुताबिक "नैस्को" ग्रुप एक उड़ीसा की कंपनी थी और जब पिछली कांग्रेस सरकार ने कुछ स्टील फैक्ट्रियों को अनुमति दी थी तो उस में से एक फैक्ट्री वह भी थी। उपसभापति महोदया, वह फैक्ट्री जहां तक मेरी जानकारी है आज बहुत बदतर हालत में है। आप आने वाले दिनों में 20-22 और प्रायवेट स्टील प्लांट्स की अनुमति देने जा रहे हैं, महोदया, मैंने पिछली बार भी सवाल किया था और आप ने कहा था कि हमारी इकॉनोमी "ओपन अप" हो गयी है, इसलिए हम कुछ नहीं कर सकते हैं। मैं आप से जानना चाहता हूं कि इन प्रस्तावों में से कितने प्रस्ताव स्वीकार हुए हैं और कितने प्लांट्स चालू हुए हैं? अगर नई स्टील फैक्ट्रीज के शुरू होने में देर हो रही है तो उस की क्या वजह है?

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Sir, I would like to give a definite figure about export and import position in our country. This year our country has exported about 2 million tonnes of steel. In the coming year, India is going to export more than 2 million tonnes of steel. We have imported about 2 million tonnes this year. From the above figures, it is clear that our export is matching our import. Regarding the private steel plants, the hon. Member has rightly said that the Government has no say because the steel industry is an open industry; no licence is required; and no permission is required. But, we have to admit one thing and that is, Indian steel industry is doing well. At the time of Independence India was producing only one million tonnes of steel. Today, India is producing about 22 million tonnes of steel. And, after completion of the Ninth Five Year Plan, our demand would be about 38 million tonnes. It will be possible for India, with the expansion of the present steel plant, modernisation, in getting up new projects in the private sector, to fulfil the target. And India will become self-sufficient in steel production after completion of the Ninth Five Year Plan.

श्री राजनाथ सिंह "सूर्या": महोदया, अभी मंत्री जी ने जो उत्तर दिया है, उस में कहा है कि अंतर्राष्ट्रीय बाजार में जो स्टील है, उस के दाम हमारी स्टील से कम हैं। फिर भी वह कह रहे हैं कि हमारा निर्यात बढ़ रहा है। यद्यपि यह कांट्रेडिक्टरी है, लेकिन फिर भी जब इस के फिगर्स उन्होंने दिए हैं तो उस पर विश्वास करना ही पड़ेगा। महोदया, मैं

मंत्री जी के उत्तर के द्वितीय भाग की अंतिम पंक्ति के विस्तार में जाना चाहता हूं। उस में कहा गया है कि, "रुग्ण कंपनियां के संबंध में औद्योगिक एवं वित्तीय पुनर्निर्माण बोर्ड उन की समस्याओं का समाधान करने के लिए संस्थागत तंत्र उपलब्ध कराता है।" महोदया, पिछले दिनों भी एक संस्था के संबंध में सदन में प्रश्न उपस्थित हुआ था और यहां तमाम सदस्यों ने कहा था कि जिस प्रकार से इंडस्ट्रियल ग्रोथ के लिए संस्था को तंत्र उपलब्ध कराना चाहिए उस प्रकार का तंत्र उपलब्ध नहीं कराया जा रहा है। मैं मंत्री महोदय से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या रुग्ण संस्थाओं को तंत्र उपलब्ध कराने के लिए जो प्रयास चल रहा है, उस से वह संतुष्ट हैं यद्यपि सदन के सदस्य संतुष्ट नहीं हैं?

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Sir, the Government has taken several measures to solve the various problems faced by the small scale steel industry in our country. In the private sector, in our country, there is only one integrated steel plant,—TISCO—situated at Jamshedpur.

In private sector there are two large-scale electric arc furnace industries in our country. Both of them are doing well. There are 184 electric arc fur naces in our country. Out of them 88 are not working because of the fact that these are very very small units. Due to power price hike and continuous power cuts these small units are suffering various problems. The Government has adopted various measures to deal with this matter. I am happy to say that this year's Budget, presented by the United Front Government, is a growth-oriented Budget. The Government has given importance to infrastructure projects like railway, communication and ports. So, the demand for steel is going to go up in the coming year in our country. Secondly, reduction in custom duty in the Budget of 1997-98 on capital goods from 25 per cent to 20 per cent on raw materials like coking coal...(*Interruptions*)...

श्री राजनाथ सिंह "सूर्य": श्रीमन्, मेरा यह सवाल ही नहीं था। मैंने पूछा कुछ दूसरा था और माननीय मंत्री जी बता कुछ दूसरा ही रहे हैं।

SHRI BIRENDERA PRASAD BAISHYA: Sir, the hon. Member particularly asked me what measures have been adopted by the Government of India to solve the problems faced by small-scale industries. This is the reply. The main problem of these electric arc furnaces is power. My Ministry has taken up the matter with the respective State Governments. The West Bengal Government has already given some reduction. I hope the rest of the State Governments will also give some reduction. Secondly, the Reserve Bank of India has recently announced the Credit Policy, which shall be helpful for this industry. Thirdly, the coking coal's import duty has been cut down from 5 per ent to 3 per cent. In respect of non-coking coal the duty has been cut down from 20 per cent to 10 per cent. In the nickel and ferro alloys ...(*Interruptions*)... This will be helpful for small-steel industries. But, the main problem faced by small-steel industries is that the technology adopted by them cannot be competitive with the modern technology. So, the Government has already discussed the matter with the Association. They have given certain proposals. My Ministry is examining them.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Shri V. Narayanasamy.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Sir, the hon. Minister was telling about the problems faced by small-scale industries and how they are going to solve them. The main problem of steel industries—whether it is SAIL or any other public steel mill—is that the Government is imposing a duty of 15 per cent. The same is being imposed on small-scale industries also. No concessions are given to small-scale industries. This is very vital. They are comparing them with the big and the very big units.

Sir, the Finance Minister, in his Budget Speech, said that in induction furnace units and small roller units there is evasion of duty; therefore, he was bringing a scheme by which the evasion of duty would be eliminated. Now, when the Finance Bill has also been passed in the Lok Sabha, nothing has come so far for the purpose of protecting the genuine producers of steel. He has said that he will constitute a committee and the report would be submitted to him because that is concerned with the Steel Ministry. This was a very welcome step. But, so far we have not got anything from them. Therefore, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether these two aspects, viz., reduction of duty for small units will be

considered by the Government for protecting those industries, and when the scheme will be announced by the Finance Minister in consultation with the Steel Ministry.

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Sir, this is a very important issue raised by the hon. Member. I am really happy about it. My Ministry has already taken up the matter with the Finance Ministry, and we will pursue it.

SHRI JAYANT KUMAR MALHOUTRA: Sir, I am not very satisfied with the answer given by the hon. Minister because this is a very vital industry, and I look at it as one of the industries which could be considered as a thrust industry for India because we have all the raw materials here. Despite the fact that we are having more employment and that our productivity levels are low, still our labour cost, compared with that in other countries, is less than half. it is about 13 per cent in India. All the raw materials are available in India, and they are much cheaper.

The only area where we have a problem is power, which, I think, can be taken care of by the industries themselves putting up generating units. A major problem, as I see it not only for the private sector but also for large Government units, is the technological problem, the gap that we have in tecnology. I think, the Ministry must address itself to this problem because unless we bridge this gap or narrow this gap, we cannot become a world player in this field.

We have had a lot of representations before the Standing Committee on Industry from the steel industry regarding the problems that have cropped up due to the reduction in duty. Yet the hon. Minister says that the only imports that have taken place are 250.000 tonnes, which means that this reduction in duty is not a problem.

The major problem is that we have this gap in technology, and Indian producers are charging much higher prices than they should be charging, compared to the prices the world over. I think the Ministry should play a role in guiding the industry as far as this technology gap is concerned. It should assist industries, both small and large scale, and it should try and narrow down the gap so that we can become world players in this field.

I want the hon. Minister to respond to this because the industry he heads or the Ministry he heads has a very important and key role to play for India in the coming years.

SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Sir, I do agree with the hon. Member that the labour cost in our country is very cheap compared to that in any developed country. This is not a problem. The problem is that the iron and steel industry needs coking coal. Our production of coking coal is not sufficient to meet the requirement. We have to import coking coal all the time.

I do agree with the hon. Member that shortage of power is the basic problem in our country. So, my Ministry has suggested that the steel industry should go in for captive power projects.

It is true and I remember that in response to a question put by an hon. Member, I told the the House earlier that the reduction of the customs duty had certainly affected the steel industry in our country.

Secondly, Sir, it is very important to note that market always depends upon supply and demand. The price of steel is not determined by the steel industry; it is determined by the market. So, the Government has taken measures

I am thankful to the hon. Member. The Government will look into the suggestion made by him.

Special Rehabilitation Facilities for Orthopaedically Handicapped Children

*503. SHRI YERRA NARAYANA SWAMY: Will the Minister of WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to set up special rehabilitation facilities for orthopaedically handicapped children;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it it a fact that a large number of physically handicapped children are not getting adequate facilities; and

(d) if so, the steps proposed in this regard?